

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3122

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 0004

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB IN US

SUBJECT: MINE DISASTER: PRESS REPORTS

1. THE CHASNALA MINE DISASTER CONTINUES TO BE FRONT PAGE NEWS IN MOST OF INDIA'S PRESS THIS NEW YEARS DAY. MOST SIGNIFICANT ARE THE PRESS REPORTS OF SOVIET RUSHING MASSIVE AID TO THE AREA AND THE AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL FOR TECHNICAL AND OTHER REASONS AS NOTED HERE.

2. ACCORDING TO THE CPI PATRIOT, "THE US WHICH HAD EARLIER PROMISED TO PROVIDE PUMPS FOR DEWATERING, APPEARS TO BE BACKING OUT BY PUTTING FORWARD MANY CONDITIONS TO FLY OUT THE PUMPS WHICH THE GOI IS REPORTED TO BE AGAINST CONCEDING." AND THIS PAPER GOES ON TO SAY A FLEET OF SOVIET PLANES CARRYING 60 TONS OF EQUIPMENT AND 15 EXPERTS FOR RESCUE AND DEWATERING OPERATIONS AT THE CHASNALA MINES LANDED AT PALAM AIRPORT ON WEDNESDAY (DEC 31). ALSO THAT ON WEDNESDAY GOI HAD MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO RUSH THE SOVIET PUMPS AND EXPERTS TO DHANBAD. FOUR MORE PLANES CARRYING MORE EQUIPMENT AND EXPERTS ARE EXPECTED IN NEXT TWO DAYS. ACCORDING TOSAME PRESS REPORT, A FLEET OF POLISH PLANES CARRYING EQUIPMENT AND EXPERTS IS ALSO ENROUTE. EACH SOVIET AND POLISH PUMP CAN TAKE OUT WATER FROM THE CHASNALA MINE AT THE RATE OF 2000 GALLONS PER MINUTE. HOWEVER, NO MENTION WAS MADE AT

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 00004 010917Z

WHAT HEAD OF WATER.

3. THE HINDUSTAN TIMES CARRIES IN LARGE BOLD PRINT "AMERICAN PUMPS ARE NOT SUITABLE." IT GOES ON TO SAY THAT AN OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN AT THE CHASNALA COLLIERY SAYS THEY NO LONGER NEED THE US PUMPS IN LIGHT OF THE LATEST REPORT FROM THE US EMBASSY IN NEW DELHI. THE US PUMPS CAN DRAIN OUT JOINTLY 1200 GALLONS OF WATER PER MINUTE AND NOT 2500 GALLONS AS STATED EARLIER. BESIDES THERE ARE SOME TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES WITH THEM. AS THE PROSPECTS OF US PEMS COMING TO THE RESCUE OF THE MINERS ARE RECEDING, THE GLOOM HAS DEEPENED.

4. ACCORDING TO THE STATESMAN, WITH THE COMMISSIONING OF FOUR PUMPS FROM POLAND THE MINE WOULD BE DEWATERED AT THE RATE OF 11,000 GALLONS A MINUTE; IT GOES ON TO MENTION A TEAM OF 15 SOVIET EXPERTS ARRIVING WITH 60 TONS OF EQUIPMENT FOR RESCUE AND DEWATERING AT THE CHASNALA MINE.

5. THE TIMES OF INDIA SAYS THAT DESPITE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES IN PROCURING HIGH POWERED PUMPS FROM THE US AND THE FEAR OF FURTHER SEEPAGE OF WATER TO THE MINE, DEWATERMING OPERATIONS AT CHASNALA COLLIERY HAS BEEN STEPPED UP. THIS PAPER ALSO CARRIES NEWS OF SOVIET PROVIDING 15 EXPERTS AND 60 TONS OF EQUIPMENT WITH FOUR MORE SOVIET PLANES LOADED WITH EXPERTS AND EQUIPMENT EXPECTED TO ARRIVE DURING NEXT FEW DAYS. MENTION IS ALSO MADE OF A POLISH FLEET CARRYING EXPERTS AND EQUIPMENT TO THE MINE SITE.SAXBE

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